The Bhoo-Dan-Movement

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There are some people who say that the land problem cannot be solved in a non-violent and peaceful way. Even conceding that it may be effective in individual life, the non-violent method is doomed to meet with failure in solving the broader problems of the society. According to them, the economic, political and social problems of the society can only be solved by a violent armed insurrection of the 'proletariat' against the 'bourgeoisie!' They, therefore, advocate a bloody revolution in our country for solving not only our land problem, but also all other problems. How can the big zamindars and land-owners be expected to surrender their land voluntarily, when it is not in their interest to do so?—they ask. However might one try to reason with them, they would not part with their land. The only way, therefore, as has been proved effective by history, lies in a relentless and bitter struggle against all oppressors. As soon as the existing government is overthrown, and the land-owners exterminated, the exploitation of the landless labourers would cease to exist. The State would become *ipso facto* the owner of all land. The system of collective farming would then be introduced and instantaneously all the problems would vanish like the morning dew before the rising sun. In short, there would be peace, plenty and happiness in the new dispensation.

This is the argument of a section of people who believe in violence. They base their argument on two important assumptions. These are: one, that violence is the only effective way for solving all problems—social, economic and political, and since it is against the self-interest of the land-owners to give up their land voluntarily, there is all the more reason why they should be compelled to do so by means of a

violent revolution; and two, that collectivization of land is the *sine qua non* for agricultural prosperity. None of these assumptions, as we shall see later on, bear close scrutiny.

The first assumption that violence is the only way for solving the social problems is not only wrong, but also the root of most, if not all, evils. To any thinking man it is clear that violence produces more violence, that 'the inevitable results of violence are as old as the hills,' that the means and the ends are as inseparable as the seed is from the tree, and that nothing permanent can be built on violence. It is also a queer psychology which preaches distrust and hatred in men. It is a wrong and mistaken view of psychology which ignores or overlooks the innate goodness of man and pretends that the psychology of the land-owners is 'not to liquidate themselves'. In fact, the result of the Bhoodan Yajna has proved beyond any shadow of doubt, if any proof was needed, that the land-owners are also human beings; they have good hearts, are sympathetic to the afflictions and miseries of the people, and are moved by the sorrows of others as any other human being. It also has demonstrated the fact that the non-violent appeal to the inner goodness and sense of justice has touched their hearts. For example, at a meeting of the zamindars of Kanpur district, a resolution was passed extending their full support to Bhoodan Yajna. The resolution declared unequivocally that the zamindars would make their utmost contribution in making Shri Vinoba's mission a success. In the meeting itself, not less than eight zamindars announced their desire of donating land of varying denomination, ranging from 10 to 151 acres. In adition to this, further donations were made when Shri Vinoba visited Kanpur. In Mangroth, a village in Banda district of the U. P., all the fifty-four land-owners donated all their land. But perhaps the most outstanding example has been that of the Maharaja of Kashi who donated in all 10,000 acres of land. In this connection,

he wrote a touching letter to Shri Vinoba. Here is a relevant portion from that letter.

> " It is difficult to describe in words the sentiments which have inspired you to undertake this difficult mission and to tread the whole country on foot without being least disturbed by the seasonal changes for its fulfilment. You are your ideals incarnate. ... People have begun to feel that an order based on the Indian culture and traditions and intended for the welfare and happiness of the people, is about to come into being. ... May your efforts bear fruit ! "

It is impossible here to go into each personal case of land-donation made by the zamindars. Their name is legion. It is true that greater response to Shri Vinoba's call came from the poor; but it is not true to say that the zamindars have remained indifferent or have turned deaf ears to his appeal. In spite of doubts and criticisms, Shri Vinoba has so far collected 3,37,506 acres of land.* This in itself shows that the zamindars have risen to the occasion. Considering the brief time taken to collect this land, and the extent of destruction that would have been caused by a violent revolution, it must be admitted that the movement has gained initial success. It may be that the process has been slower–slower than our expectation. But Shri Vinoba is not after quick results–by short-cut-violent means. " Nothing can be achieved through pressure or force ", he says. " If force is to be used, I am not required. My feeble hands would not be of any use." He has further said, " One way of redistributing land is by force and violence. Another is through non-violence and I am preparing the ground for the use of the peaceful method. In this method, the main work is of *spreading the idea* (italics ours). Propagation of an idea takes time in the beginning. But once it spreads, there is no more delay in

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* Figures available till 23rd July, 1952.

accomplishing things. I do not think it would require many years to spread my ideas about land. If all work hard in propagating, even one year would be enough to complete the task." * For, "I have faith in the people. Every one says that people do not want to part with land. Still I have the courage to go about asking people to give it away. Such request does need courage. I have the courage because of my utter humility ... ... In every one I see the image of God himself ... ... I shall praise people, never denounce them or say harsh things against them. Every one has his good points. I am convinced that people have great qualities. They have to be discovered and appreciated. I shall approach them with humility and am sure they will give what I want." Subsequent events have proved the truth of his statements.

It is, however, wrong to suggest that non-violence does not envisage legislation. Communists also want legislation. But they would begin with murder and violence and would bring in legislation at the end. There too, they would not wait till the public opinion is created in the country in favour of legislation. They would simply force it down the throat of the people, without paying any regard whatsoever to their wishes. Vinobaji has said, " Non-vioence does not rule out legislation. But it should be legislation backed by public opinion. The majority opinion should be in favour of it. It does not matter if some people are opposed to it ...... My plan also envisages legislation at the end, but I want to begin with pity and kindness. When every heart begins to feel that the present order is unjust, when pity is created and a proper understanding of the situation brought about,

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* "The world is to be conquered not by swords, but by new ideas" — Emile Zola.

" It is to him who masters our minds by the force of truth and not to those who enslave them by violence, that we owe our reverence" — Voltaire.

" Minds are conquered not by arms but by greatness of souls" — Spinoza.

legislation can come in at the end. This is the non-violent way." To any thinking man who cannot reconcile himself to the violent methods advocated by our 'leftists' friends, the solution lies in adopting a peaceful and non-violent means.

This brings us to the second assumption, namely, the solution of our land problem ultimately lies in nationalizing and introducing collectivism in land. But our experience in the last few decades has led us to believe that collective farming when thrust upon the peasants, brings misery and suffering for the peasants instead of materially improving their condition by even a fraction of a degree. Collectivism means that the peasant must become an agricultural proletariat; it means that as a member of a collective farm he must have infinitely less liberty and economic freedom than as an independent farmer. Naturally the peasants become bewildered and resentful over collectivization, which upsets their traditional manner of life and which is contrary to their instincts and habits. We have seen the result of collectivization in Russia and the price that she had to pay for it. Huge losses of cattle wealth, several unrests among the peasants, the minute state-control, the cumbrus and excessive intervention in farm management, arbitrary low pricing of farm products, the loss of land by a million of 'Kulaks', starvation and mass-scale deportation into 'correctional labour' camps, etc., were the result of the State's embarkation on the collectivization policy. Above all, collectivism committed the mistake of overlooking the human element in agriculture. By defying machinery and by entirely subordinating the most natural impulses in man to the needs of rapid industrialization, collectivism made an utterly wrong approach to the problem of increasing man's resourcefulness. " It is a scheme that fails to take into consideration many organic processes of the greatest importance in agriculture, particularly, the human element in farming. In

Soviet Russia, machines were not adjusted to the needs and conveniences of farmers, but all agriculture and particularly the whole land tenure was reshaped for the convenient use of machines and with neglect and frequently direct sacrifice of the interests of many millions of farmers ". * It is, therefore, no wonder that within a decade of introducing collectivism, a number of decrees were passed in Russia reforming the right of the *Kolkhoz* to hold land and extending the rights of the members to own houses, a garden and a small strip of land and some livestock. It has been found that the farmers are taking much more interest in this plot of land, however small it might be, than in the collective farms.

In recent years also we have seen how some countries attempting experiments with collective farming had to revert to the original small-scale peasant farming. For example, according to a recent report, the Yugoslav Government is proceeding with a series of measures aimed at winning over the independent peasants whose lack of enthusiasm for the agrarian policy of the Government has contributed to the serious decline in cereal production since World War II. The Government has ultimately taken a new measure, which is to disband the collectivized farms in poor regions. According to a Yugo-Press News Agency report, land held by one-fourth of the collective farms in Slovania is being returned to the owners. The same process is going on in other unproductive agricultural regions of the country. In view of all this, we have no alternative but to conclude that forcible introduction of collective farming without the consent of the peasants, will not only rob them of their initiative, but also jeopardise the whole economic structure of the country.

As against this, the non-violent approach to the land problem is that land, being a free gift of nature like air and

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* Proceedings of the 5th International Conference of Agricultural Economists.

water, should belong to all. The fundamental principle of the 'Bhoo-Dan-Movement', as has been restated in the Sevapuri resolution of the Sarva Seva Sangh, is that "all children of the soil have an equal right over Mother Earth, in the same way as those born of a mother have over her. It is, therefore, essential that the entire land of the country should be redistributed anew, providing roughly at least five acres of dry or one acre of wet land to every family." The principle that land is a social property must be accepted first. Bertrand Russell has also said that private property in land has no justification, except historically through power of the sword. He has traced the origin of private property in land to the beginning of the feudal time when certain men had enough strength to force some people not to live in a certain area. "Those whom they chose to live on land became their serfs and were forced to work for them in return for their gracious permission to stay. In order to establish law in place of private force, it was necessary, in the main, to leave undisturbed the rights which had been acquired by the sword. The land became the property of those who had conquered it and the serfs were allowed to give rent instead of service. There is no justification for private property in land except the historical necessity to conciliate turbulent robbers who would not otherwise have obeyed the law.... No good to the community, of any sort or kind, results from the private ownership of land. If men were reasonable, they would decree that it should cease tomorrow." In our country things are slightly, but not wholly, different from the conditions in the West. Instead of through the power of the sword many people had acquired their rights to own land from their foreign masters.

The right attitude is, therefore, one of double rejection. Land belongs not to the State, nor to the privileged people. It belongs to the community. Although to all intents and purposes, the property in land will be vested in the cultiva-

tor, let him not think that he is the owner *par excellence* in relation to the society. Let him be aware of his duty towards the society, which alone is the rightful owner of all land. Let him understand that he is a trustee of a portion of land which belongs to the community. He will then realise his responsibility and duty towards other members of the society.

In fact, the Bhoo-Dan-Movement would be nothing if it were not essentially a psychological approach to the people. "In a society where some own land and others are landless, there can be no peace. Unless the existing social order, which is based upon inequality, strife and conflict, is replaced by one founded on equality and mutual co-operation, there can be no salvation for mankind." The success of the agrarian reform would depend on the psychological approach to the problem. Broadly speaking, this requires two-fold changes in the outlook of the people. In the first place, a change of heart and outlook is required on the part of the land-owners. They should regard the poor cultivators as members of their own families and voluntarily give away their land for the benefit of the poor. And in the second place, people should accept the principle that all land belongs to the society. The cultivators must regard themselves as trustees of the land which is owned by the society. This is just what Vinobaji's approach is. He says, "As a friend and well-wisher of both the rich and the poor, I could feel happy only if I could make the rich look upon the poor as members of their own family. Suppose the owner of a 10,000 acre farm has four sons and a fifth is born later, would he not have to make five shares of his property instead of four? I ask the landholders to regard me as an additional heir born to them and give me my share for the benefit of the poor." What he wants people to do is firstly to give away some of their land. Secondly, he wants them to engage themselves in the service of others. Finally, in this service,

they should lose all and voluntarily sacrifice everything. As he has said his aim is to bring about a three-fold revolution. " First, I want a change in people's heart ; secondly, I want to create a change in their lives ; and thirdly, I want to change the social structure. "

" But psychological changes like these cannot be brought about by wars and violent revolutions. They can only be brought about by the methods of Buddha, Christ, Ramanuja and other great teachers. " This is the peaceful and non-violent way to create the proper atmosphere for solving the land problem.

It has been said that the Bhoo-Dan-Movement of Shri Vinoba is aimed at preventing a revolution. Nothing could be further away from truth. In fact, he has said time and again that his mission is not to stave off a revolution. Of course, he does want to prevent a violent revolution and create a 'non-violent revolution' in its place.

It has been apprehended that the principle of distributing land to every family, will, in practice, again give rise to absentee landlordism and landless labourers, since every family will not till its land. This apprehension, however, has no basis. A cursory glance into the working of various Land-Distribution Committees set up by Vinobaji, will be sufficient to remove this misapprehension. As a matter of fact, four tests are applied in each case, before the distribution of land. These are : the poverty of a person, landlessness of a person, capacity of a person to till land and the desire of a person to have land and to look after it. Those who answer the tests best are being given land. In short, this is the principle which guides the distribution of land. Land is being distributed only among those who would work on land themselves. From this it must be clear that the principle of distribution of land can in no case give rise to absentee landlordism and landless labourers. Vinobaji is well aware of the difficulties

that lie in the way of a successful redistribution of land. That is why he has also made it a point that the recipient of land must not sell it for ten years. He hopes that by that time laws will have been enacted prohibiting sales of land. Such laws exist in Uttar Pradesh even now. This, in addition to the necessary precuations to prevent the rise of absentee landlordism, steps have been taken to prevent the transference of the ownership of land, as far as possible.

Land is distributed in a colourful ceremony, in which all the villagers, rich and poor, take part. A Land-Distribution Committee has been set up for each state for distributing land (See Appendix III).

The members of the Land-Distribution Committee go to the villages and distribute land to the landless. The distribution is made at a public meeting in the village. In the presence of the villagers the suitable persons are selected first. In this selection, the four tests, mentioned before, are applied. The villagers also take part in this selection. In fact the decision is made by the people, inasmuch as the tests are applied publicly and the opinion of the villagers present is taken into consideration. The first priority is however given to Harijans and other backward communities. Revenue officials accompany the committee members and complete the work of registration and other legal formalities on the spot. " The man returns home as the proud possessor of land. A new life has begun for him. He has become a land-holder. " " Just as after we solemnise the marriage of our daughter, we give her jewellery and other gifts, similarly we should arrange for other necessities of the tiller, a pair of bullocks, seeds and other requirements. " Attempts are being made to get the documentary formalities of the transactions carried out without stamp duty, registration charges etc. Governments have been approached to make necessary rules for the purpose.

The area that is given to each person depends partly upon the conditions existing in each province and partly on the number of members in each family. In Hyderabad, for example, one acre of wet land or one acre for each family member in case of dry land, subject to a maximum of six acres, has been allotted. In Madhya Pradesh, where conditions are very much similar to that of Hyderabad allotments are to be made on a similar scale. In the Vindhya Pradesh the size of allotment may be raised, whereas in the U. P. land is to be allotted on a smaller scale, as the average size of holdings is much smaller there. In other words, the principle of distributing one acre of wet or five acres of dry land is to be followed in all cases, although some alterations may be made on the merit of particular case and in the basis of local conditions.

The Hyderabad Government has framed simple rules with a view to helping the process of land distribution in Hyderabad. These rules provide 'that on receipt of the *razinamas* donating land, the Tahasildar shall obtain a report and ascertain whether any amount is due to Government either as arrears of land revenues or otherwise. On completion of the enquiry, the Tahasildar accepts the razinama and the land from then on vests in the Government. The Land-Distribution Committee then selects the persons to whom it is to be granted. The grant is subject to the conditions that if a co-operative society is formed in the village, the recipient will join it. Another condition is that the land will not be sold for ten years. If the land granted is a cultivable waste and the grantee reclaims and begins to cultivate it within two years of his receiving possession, it will be exempt from revenue assessment during the first three years. No stamp fee or registration charge will be levied.

The gifted land has been divided into three groups : one, land which is cultivated by the donor himself ; two,

cultivable land but not under cultivation, and three, land under cultivation by tenants. In the first case, land goes directly to landless peasants. In the second case, the donor is requested to donate it after breaking the same with ploughs. In case he is unable to do so, the land will have to be broken with the help of either the Government or monetary donations or the free-labour volunteers. In the last case, big tenants are requested to donate their tenancy rights and small cultivators are made full owners. Wherever Zamindari is being abolished the Zamindars are approached for the gift of the compensation. The Government is then informed of the donation so that the former can deduct the amount of the donated compensation and use the amount to help the landless peasants. There is, however, another kind of land donated by small cultivators. Some of the plots are thus as small as ·05 or ·10 acres. Clearly, these plots cannot be distributed as they are, since these are not in a single piece and are excessively fragmented. In such cases, some rich men are approached for taking up such plots and give in exchange a consolidated piece.

The work of distribution of the gifted land has been going on in some of the States. It may be mentioned here that the plots of land, thus distributed are not lying uncultivated after distribution. In most of the cases, land has been given to those who had been working on it. They have no difficulty in carrying on cultivation work. But in those cases where land has been given to those who were not working on it, steps have been taken to provide them with the necessary implements for cultivation, such as, ploughs, bullocks, seeds etc. Since land-distribution function is an important occasion in the village, and people taking part in it become conscious of the non-violent revolution, some of them, who are rich enough, voluntarily come forward and donate the necessary implements. Otherwise, rich people are approached for making donations for this purpose. Hence

distribution of land has kept pace with the cultivation and steps have been taken to see that nowhere it comes in the way of cultivation work or the production of food.

This is, in brief, the distribution side of the Bhoo-Dan-Yajna. This seems to be quite practical and scientific. Yet this principle of distribution has recently come under criticism by some learned economists. In the first place, while conceding that the existing agrarian conditions are far from satisfactory and that it should be solved by a peaceful and non-violent way, they say that the Bhoo-Dan-Yajna has got serious limitations as an instrument for the solution of our land and food problems. They say that the 'distribution part' of the movement is not sound, for it would lead to further fragmentation of land and ultimately interfere with the food production. In their opinion, the principle of distributing one acre of wet land or five acres of dry land to a landless peasant family would tie the peasant with land and would increase the pressure of population on land. Moreover, one acre of wet land or five acres of dry land is inadequate for earning a bare livelihood for a family.

It must be pointed out that the economic consequence of the Bhoo-Dan-Movement has not been properly understood by many. Nobody has ever said that the Bhoo-Dan-Movement, like a miracle, will solve all our problems. Nor has anybody claimed that like the magic carpet described in the Arabian Nights Tales, it would carry us to the El Dorado in the twinkling of an eye. Nobody is so aware of its limitations as Shri Vinoba himself. That is why he has repeatedly said that he is not bringing into his work the problem of what an economic holding is, nor is he tackling the land problem as such. He has humbly said that it is not his work. As for the economic side of the land problem, he said that society itself could look after it. Not that he is unable to think about it. But he has deliberately chosen his work which is to create a

moral and favourable atmosphere in the country so that the land problem could be solved peacefully. "I do not expect," he has said, "that all the problems of rural India would be solved by giving land to the landless. Land is only one aspect of the great problem of rural economy."

What then is the *raison d'etre* for such a movement, if it does not solve the problems of our rural economy? We have already gone into this question in the preceding pages. We have seen that there is a necessity for solving the land problem peacefully; that a psychological revolution is required for the successful solution of our land problems. The Movement aims at that. In fact, the Bhoo-Dan-Movement is essentially a revolutionary process aimed at the change of mental outlook which will facilitate the peaceful transference of land-ownership from those who do not till, to those who want to till land. At present most of the land-owners are town-dwellers who have no interest in land. They go to the villages only to take the lion's share of the produce during the harvest time. They hardly invest money in land and have little or no interest in improving the quality of the soil or the produce. The gravity of the present situation can only be properly realised in the context of the alarmingly increasing number of our landless peasants. According to the estimate of the Orissa Land Tenure and Land Revenue Committee, nearly 39% peasants belong to the category of the landless labourers. The situation is, therefore, fraught with dangerous possibilites. Unless their 'Land-hunger' is abated, unless land is voluntarily made available to them by the rich landlords, there would be a bloody revolution.

The immediate and peaceful abatement of the perpetual 'Land-hunger' of the peasants, is an important pre-requisite of a successful revolution in the sphere of our agriculture. Vinobaji has said : " When the people are hungry, it is our duty to give land to the landless at once without entering into a discussion about the details of distribution and their

pros and cons. When a man is hungry we feed him with rice and dal or fruits, but do not go about discussing what kind of food would suit him best. " Nobody has ever claimed that Bhoo-Dan-Movement is an end in itself. What is necessary to keep in mind is that it is an important means to bring about a non-violent revolution in the sphere of our agricultural ownership.

But if the goal of social justice and economic equality is to be attained, there must be a simultaneous attack on other problems also, connected with land. It is true that although the question of land-ownership plays an important part, the land problem of India is not a problem only of land-ownership. There are a numher of other problems connected with land. An attack on all sides, is, therefore, to be made in order to tackle this problem. In order to increase the yield from land, the irrigation system and manuring must be changed from what is at present. There must be more wells, ponds and canals, which are comparatively inexpensive but effective means of irrigation; there must be cheap and improved methods of manuring known to the peasant; seed of better variety must be made available to him. In order to prevent further subdivision and fragmentation of land, laws must be enacted if necessary. The following table will show the average size of holdings in some countries of the world and in some of the Indian States.

WORLD

Countries	*Acres*
United Kingdom	62·0
Denmark	40·0
Germany	21·5
France	20·25
Belgium	15·5
Holland	26·0
U. S. A.	148·0

INDIA

States	*The number of cultivated Acres–per cultivator*
United Provinces	2·55
Bihar and Orissa	3·1
Madras	4·9
Punjab	9·2
Bombay	12·2
Bengal	3·1
Central Provinces	8·5
Assam	3·0

The above table, however, does not give the correct picture of the situation, since they include holdings of very different sizes.

In fact the real nature and extent of the existing uneconomic holdings in India, is more depressing. For example, in a village in Poona, it was found that out of 729 fragmented plots 468 were less than one acre and 112 less than one-fourth of an acre. In eight villages in Jullundar in the Punjab the average field does not exceed one-fourth acre. In a village in Tinnevelly in Madras Presidency, 40 agriculturists cultivate an area of 61 acres. In another village out of 1013 plots, 600 plots are under ½ acre in size. In a village in Oudh, the holdings of 40% of the cultivators are below 1 acre, the smallest field being ·015 acre only. According to the findings of the Orissa Land Revenue and Land Tenure Committee nearly 26·7 per cent peasant families have less than one acre of land. We could go on citing examples *ad infinitum*, but the following table should show more clearly the large percentage of uneconomic holdings in India. *

* The size of holding has a tendency to decrease continuously as the pressure of population on land increases. Thus Dr. Mann has shown how the size of holding has decreased continuously in the last century in a village in Poona as below :—

Year	*Average size of holdings*
1771	40 acres
1808	17½ „
1820–40	14 „
1915	7 „

In view of this a moderate estimate of the size of holdings less than one acre may be placed at 40% if not more, considering the increase in population at a terrific rate for the last few decades.

Less than 1 acre	23 per cent.
1 to 5	33 ,, ,,
5 to 10	20 ,, ,,
Over 10 acres	24 ,, ,,

It is, therefore, clear that the existing situation compares very unfavourably with the average size of holdings in other countries. It also indicates that agriculture has ceased to be a profitable occupation. The holdings are hopelessly uneconomic and even do not provide one square meal a day. In view of this, it must be admitted that the principle of distribution of 5 acres of dry or 1 acre of wet land per family is an improvement over the existing situation. It may or may not be an economic holding, although it is very difficult to define what an economic holding is. The nature of the crop, climate, soil, marketing facilities have all to be taken into account to find out a definition of the 'economic' holding. Intensity of cultivation is also an important factor. In India, China and Japan 2-3 acres would be considered as an average economic holding. Given the necessary facilities, therefore, 5 acres of dry land or 1 acre of wet land may produce much more than the present output. But that is not all. In order to prevent further subdivision, the law of inheritance should be reformed.

The problem of fragmentation and subdivision of holdings is not peculiar to India alone. Many countries of the world have had to face this problem and some of them have successfully tackled it. For example, in France where the fundamental problem of agriculture was the subdivision of farms which kept down the efficiency of agriculture by nearly 30%, laws were enacted to legalise the work of restriping holdings and the Civil Code was modified, "whereby an agricultural undertaking of less than 200,000 franks in value could be declared indivisible." In Germany along with the measures for the consolidation of land, laws were passed to encourage the preservation of economic holdings. In 1933,

the pace of agrarian reform was further pushed forward by the enactment of land inheritance law, under which all agricultural properties which were large enough to support a peasant family were made eligible to become 'inherited free-holds'. In Denmark, in order to prevent subdivision it has been laid down that no share should fall below the minimum limit, fixed by the Government. The Agricultural Department is now required to approve every division of land. The list is not exhaustive. But this shows that there is no reason why such laws should not be enacted in India also. In India, because of the tradition, religious customs etc., the British law of inheritance may not be suitable. But the Danish law prohibiting further subdivision below the minimum limit, seems to be suitable for India.

There is, however, one thing we should guard ourselves against. There are well-meaning persons, who advocate collective or co-operative farming in India. We have already examined the nature and effect of collective farming and we do not propose to repeat our conclusions. But so far as co-operative farming is concerned, it must be pointed out that under that slogan of co-operative farming real issues are being shelved. There has been an attempt to make co-operative farming a pre-condition for land distribution. This sort of conditions attached to land distribution shows the indifference, or should we say, unwillingness of some people to make any change in the present situation. Apparently they might seem to hold rational views but at hearts they are the champions of the *status quo*. The question of the redistribution of land comes first. Then comes the methods of farming. Once the land-hunger of the people is abated, we can work among them to introduce co-operative farming. No reformer can fail to take cognizance of the fact that the necessary atmosphere for the co-operative farming is lacking in our country. However desirable may the co-operative farming be, time is not yet ripe for it. "The various

distinctions of class, community and creed, the disruption of communal life in the villages since the establishment *Pax Britanica* in India, the existence of the depressed and 'untouchables' classes who form a large mass of the rural population are the despair of even the most ardent advocate of co-operative farming in this country." Under these circumstances, to force upon the people a revolution of this type, would only upset the whole economic order, if not actually lead to chaos. In agriculture, as in other spheres, the only way to ensure enduring progress is to temper our ideologies with practical considerations.

This is not to suggest that peasant proprietorship is the inevitable end for this country. All that we say is that this is by far the most practicable and fruitful step that can now be taken in this country. Hence it should be pursued. Like India today, the Western countries also once found their agriculture in the shackles of landlordism and feudal order. The remedies they adopted have stood the test of time and agricultural economists today are increasingly accepting the doctrine that peasant family farms are superior to large-scale farms. England has started the Small Holding Movement and Russia has also partially conceded the principle of individual ownership. A Western expert has observed : "So far it has not yet been proved that given equal opportunities, family farming could be beaten in the costs of production and in the technical and economic performance by large-scale farms, no matter whether these are privately owned and managed estates, corporations or collective farms.... So far, the highest technical and social performance of every sort of agricultural production, even with its many disadvantages and the discrimination against it, have been accomplished, under the whole range of climate conditions, by family farmers." *
The superiority of the peasant farming over large-scale farming

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* "The reconstruction of World Agriculture"— By Prof. Karl Brandt.

is today an established fact. That is why it is getting increasing acceptance all over the world.

Our position regarding the form of cultivation is quite clear. We have seen how China, Japan and numerous other countries have been carrying on agriculture successfully on the basis of individual farming. Despite the prophecy of Marx, small-scale farming has persisted in several countries. In Japan, the average holding is of 2·5 acres. In spite of that, her average yield of produce from land is three times that of India. That is because the Japanese practise intensive cultivation with the help of better manures and irrigation system.

The agrarian conditions in these countries are quite akin to the conditions prevalent in our country. There is, therefore, no reason why agriculture cannot be carried on profitably here too on the basis of individual farming. We believe that what has been possible in Japan, would be possible in India also, provided necessary reforms were made in the methods of agriculture. We are sure that the yield from land could be increased immensely and could far exceed the average yield of the so-called agriculturally prosperous countries, as has been proved recently in many villages in India, if better seeds, better and cheaper manure and irrigational facilities were made available to our peasants. We are convinced that the growing 'land-hunger' of our peasants must be satisfied first, if any improvement is to be made. Co-operative farming may be introduced later on with the sanction of the peasants. In addition to this, the income of the small land-holders must be supplemented by the income derived from the cottage industries. There must, therefore, be a *pari passu* development of the rural industries. As Vinobaji has said, "in order to complete the picture of the new rural economy we will have to start village industries based on decentralisation." The need of our rural economy is not the divorce of cottage industries from agriculture, but a happy blending of the two.

The cottage industries, too, have their own problems. The financial condition of the peasants is too unsatisfactory to enable them to save. There is, therefore, a need for establishing a Rural Industries Finance Corporation by the Government. Such institutions for lending money to the artisans, for providing them with marketing facilities etc., are not at all unknown to some countries in the world. As a matter of fact, such institutions do exist in Germany and Switzerland. The Bombay Industrial and Economic Enquiry Committee too recommended the establishment of such banks long ago. With the formation of such banks, the main hurdle in the development of the cottage industries will be removed. As a matter of fact, the Sarva Seva Sangh had this picture in view, when it stated categorically in its Sevapuri resolution that economic equality is possible "only under a decentralised economy, i. e., through village industries." Thus while renewing its pledge to make the Bhoo-Dan-Yajna a success by collecting 25 lakhs acres of land, it lays special emphasis on the need for developing rural industries.

The support of our academicians and politicians to the cottage industries has been more or less a fashion, dictated more by the past promises than by proper and full realisation of its necessity. Were it not so, they would have removed the obstacles one by one that lie in the way for development of the cottage and small-scale industries. It is now, therefore, high time for them to make a new beginning on a clean slate, while the silent social revolution is going on, transforming the mental outlook and creating a new life in our people.

APPENDIX I

Tha Sarva Seva Sangh in its meeting held on the 23rd November, 1951, passed the following resolution on the Bhoo-Dan-Yajna :

" Whereas the Sarva Seva Sangh believes that the Bhoo-Dan-Yajna, inspired and advocated by Shri Vinobaji, is an essential and inevitable step towards the building up of a non-violent society in India, it whole-heartedly supports the movement for Bhoo-Dan.

The Sarva Seva Sangh welcomes the enthusiastic response which the move is obtaining from all sides. The Sangh further appeals to all land-owners, small or big, to respond to this inspiring call of Shri Vinobaji and to take their full share in this great sacrifice.

The Sangh specially appeals to the constructive institutions started by Mahatma Gandhi and all those individuals and institutions who have been inspired by his philosophy to work for the speedy progrees of this Yajna with all their strength and devotion, so that the moral conscience of our nation may be awakened, and equality and peace established in this land through a peaceful and non-violent social revolution. "

APPENDIX II

The Sarva Seva Sangh announced its following resolution at the Sarvodaya Conference, Sevapuri :

BHOO-DAN-YAJNA

The Sarvodaya Samaj aims at the establishment, on the basis of truth and non-violence, of a classless and casteless society in which there is no exploitation and everybody gets full opportunity for individual growth and development. The main issue before us is to devise ways and means to proceed

towards this object in the face of the economic inequality rampant in the country. The Bhoo-Dan-Yajna movement, inspired and led by Vinobaji, has provided a solution for it in ample measure. Demonstrating the efficacy of non-violence, this movement has enlivened again our faith in non-violence. We are glad to note that the movement has attracted the attention not only of this country but also of those abroad. As desired by our workers and countrymen, it is but meet that this movement is carried on with redoubled zeal and vigour under the direction of the Sarva Seva Sangh. Shri Vinobaji is also of the view that instead of confining the movement to his personal efforts alone it should be made nation-wide. The Sarva Seva Sangh, therefore, feels called upon to take up this responsibility on its shoulders under the leadership of Shri Vinobaji.

The fundamental principle of the Bhoo-Dan-Yajna movement is that all children of the soil have an equal right over Mother Earth, in the same way as those born of a mother have over her. It is, therefore, essential that the entire land of the country should be equitably redistributed anew, providing roughly at least five acres of dry land or one acre of wet land to every family. The Sarvodaya Samaj by appealing to the good sense of the people should prepare their minds for this equitable distribution, and acquire within the next two years at least 25 lakhs of acres of land from about five lakhs of our villages on the rough basis of five acres per each village. This land will be distributed to those landless labourers who are versed in agriculture, want to take it, and have no other means of subsistence.

APPENDIX III

So far ' Land Distribution Committees ' have been set up in seven States. It is hoped that similar Committees will be set up soon in the remaining States. The names and

addresses of the Convenors of the existing 'Land Distribution Committees' are given below :—

State	*Name of the Convenor*	*Address*
Delhi	Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru	Gandhi Ashram, Chandni Chowk, DELHI.
Himachal Pradesh	Shri Dharamdeo Shastri	Ashokashram, P. O. Kalsi, Dt. Dehradun.
Hyderabad	Shri U. Keshaorao	830, Barakat Pura, HYDERABAD.
Madhya Pradesh	Shri Dadabhai Naik	Abhyankar House, Mahal, Nagpur No. 2.
Rajasthan	Shri Sidharaj Dhadda	Sarvodaya Centre.
Uttar Pradesh	Shri Karan Bhai	Gandhi Ashram, P. O. Sevapuri, Benares.
Vindhya Pradesh	Shri Chaturbhuj Pathak	P. O. Tikamgarh, Vindhyapradesh.

APPENDIX IV

INSTRUCTIONS TO BHOO-DAN COMMITTEES

[The following instructions were given by Shri Vinoba in the course of my talks with him some days ago concerning *Bhoo-Dan*. They are published after confirmation by him.]

I. Custody of Gift-deeds

Gift-deeds should be prepared in duplicate, each of which should be duly signed and attested by witnesses. Regional Bhoodan Committees should collect and keep them in their office and when a sufficient number is collected, they should send them to the Sarva Seva Sangh, Sevagram, *under registered post* to eliminate the chance of their being lost in transit. The Sarva Seva Sangh will return them to the respective regional committees after getting Shri Vinoba's signature on them.

2. Form of Gift-deeds

The forms sent from the Sarva Seva Sangh office will be used in places where the regional language is Hindi written in the Devanagari script. In other provinces, the form of the gift-deed should be printed in both Hindi (Devanagari script) and the regional language and script. The regional language form should be printed on one side and that of Hindi in the Nagari script on the other. Donors and witnesses should sign on the regional language form, and the Regional Bhoodan Committee should fill in the names and addresses of the donor, witnesses and other details on the back in the Hindi-Nagari form, so that it might be understood by others.

3. Money Donations in the Bhoodan-Yajna

Several persons have indicated their desire to donate money for purchasing land and distributing it to the landless. Vinobaji declines such donations and asks intending donors to purchase land themselves and offer it in the *Bhoodan-Yajna*. The Committees should follow the same practice. They too will not accept money donations for *Bhoodan*. The same rule will be observed in respect of donations of bullocks, wells, etc. That is to say, the Committees will ask the donors to donate in the form of land, wells, bullocks, etc. Donations of wells should be accepted judiciously. For, in several places it will be difficult to estimate the cost of wells. Hence, donations for wells should be taken only from persons, who are prepared to see through the construction of a well whatever it might cost.

4. Distribution of Gifted Land

(a) Land should be distributed only after a gift-deed is signed by Vinoba.

(b) The work of distribution can be carried on even in the rainy season. But land will belong to the new cultivator only after the crop is harvested.

(c) In the initial stage the work of distributing land should not be entrusted to local committees. Though their help should be taken, and the preparatory work should be got done from them, the responsibility of distributing land

should entirely rest with the Pradesh Committees. The work of distributing land plays an important role in the success of the *Bhoodan-Yajna*. If it is not done properly, and deserving persons do not get land, the very object of *Bhoodan* will be defeated, and no new land-gifts will be available. But if it is carried on properly, new land-gifts might be obtained even at the time of distribution.

(d) No haste should be made in distributing land. It is not proper to start distributing land immediately land-gifts are obtained. It would be advisable to wait for some months before they are distributed to the landless.

(e) Our first object is to give land to the absolutely landless people. Those possessing some land (though not much) will be given if surplus land is left after it is distributed among the absolutely landless.

5. Acquiring Land-gifts

(a) Regional Bhoodan Committees may, if necessary, from District and local Committees and appoint even individuals for the purpose of collecting land-gifts. In order to keep up the high standard of *Bhoodan* work and to co-ordinate it, it is necessary that the intending volunteers first send in their names to their respective Bhoodan Committee and undertake the work only after they have received its consent. Regional Committees will declare names of volunteers from time to time.

Needless to say that every person is personally free to persuade his friends to make their offerings in the *Bhoodan-Yajna*.

(b) Every donor should be explained at the time of accepting land-gifts that it will be his duty to look after the gifted land and even to sow crops in it if it is not distributed before the rainy season. He is expected to hand over the produce of the gifted land to the Bhoodan Committee after deducting the amount of expense incurred by him on it.

Vallabhswami,
Joint Secretary,
Sarva Seva Sangh.

Sevagram,
4-7-52.

As. 4

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